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Interview with John M. Anspacher

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JOHN M. ANSPACHER

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Process of Getting Into Information Program

Q: This is an interview with John Anspacher, interviewed by G.L. Schmidt. And the date is March 22, 1988. John, I'd like to begin this interview by having you say a few words, maybe two to four minutes of your background before you came into the Agency, how you happened to come aboard and then how your first post was selected and then we can pick it up from there.

ANSPACHER: I came into the Agency at the behest of Mickey Boerner who had caught me in the midst of a more-or-less career job with the Psychological Strategy Board. That had come about because I had been in psychological operations during the Second World War, had been recalled into service for Korea but had failed the physical. It was there at the Psychological Strategy Board that Mickey Boerner found me and asked me to come into the Agency, to join him in Bonn, where he was PAO.

My background in information generally apart from the psychological operations stint during the war and thereafter, had been in newspapering. I had been a reporter and editor for ten or so years after graduation from college. So I had some information

capabilities and experience. I had majored in political science in college. I spoke one or two languages, including some German and English.

The transfer from Psychological Strategy Board to the USIA where Abbott Washburn was Deputy Director at the time, was made simply because another old acquaintance of mine from the wartime days was serving in the White House with President Eisenhower. He was C.D. Jackson who at one time or other before, or just afterwards, was publisher of Life Magazine. C.D. called me and asked if I wanted to go over to USIA. So whatever greasing of the ways was necessary for what was then referred to as a lateral entry were thus greased. I came to the Agency at the reasonable acceptable grade of R2, I think, and went immediately to Bonn, as Boerner's Special Assistant for Policy and Plans.

Q: Mickey was PAO in Germany.

ANSPACHER: Mickey was PAO at the time. The Ambassador was still, I think, James Conant. The DCM was “Red” Dowling who had an understanding of the U.S. Information Agency role. He was very easy to get along with, both as DCM and later, I am told, as Ambassador to Vienna and Bonn.

The German Operation

ANSPACHER: Anyway, I did go abroad with the family to Bonn and served there for two years or so. Mickey left halfway through the tour, and Joseph B. Phillips from the Agency came on as PAO. He had been Assistant Director for Europe. He also had been the number two man at the “old” IIE (predecessor to USIA) in State Department when Ed Barrett was Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. I had known Joe during the war. He had been a public relations officer with the Eisenhower headquarters in Algiers.

Anyway, I continued on in Bonn until I got the call from Washington asking about going to Southeast Asia. My first offer was Laos. I said I had a family and the children were about to go to school. And they said, “Laos is out, try Cambodia.” I agreed. And I looked

around and, strangely enough, found one of the Embassy people in Bonn who had served in Cambodia. Heaven only knows when or where. Oh, I guess he'd served in the Saigon Embassy when Cambodia was still consulate.

Q: May I stop at this point and ask you?

ANSPACHER: Sure.

Effectiveness of German Program

Q: Do you have any particular recollections of the operation's effectiveness in Germany during your period there? Or are there any particular experiences there that you think are significant?

ANSPACHER: Well, let me see. No particular experiences. It's 30 or some years ago now. We had some problems with such things as the confirmation of Mr. Conant as Ambassador to Germany with which we had to deal somehow. The other three high commissioners were all “anointed” as Ambassadors—the British and the French—were accepted as Ambassadors together. Mr. Conant had to beg off. He couldn't appear at the same time, because the United States Senate was away for the weekend and had failed to confirm him in time, which caused the Germans to raise their eyebrows somewhat about how we operated in our country. That's difficult enough to explain to Americans, much less to Germans who really didn't know an awful lot about it at that time.

Our effectiveness: I think we were reasonably effective, particularly in the programs which led to the establishment of the German-American “Houses,” because they went on for years afterwards. And in our efforts with the newspapers that we published first in Munich and then in Berlin, and with the Radio in the American Sector (RIAS). I think that the efforts we made, and perhaps still are making, to project non-communist ideas across the border into East Berlin and, we would hope, also further into East Germany, did have and are having an effect. I think our effectiveness, per se, in a country where they're

pretty sophisticated to begin with, was limited. They know a lot about the United States from their own experience and their own reading. So we didn't have to start from scratch and introduce them to the United States and to the American way. But I think over the long haul we've probably been reasonably effective in Germany both as USIS and as an Embassy. You were about to ask another question.

Q: No, I think I just wanted your opinion as to where and to what extent you thought you had been effective at that time. Because that was really a period of the true beginning of USIS operations in Germany. I know we had been there under HICOG and before that under OMGUS, but by that time, we were there as representatives of the U.S. Civilian government. The Army was out of it.

ANSPACHER: Yes.

Q: But at this time we had gone back to a regular ambassadorial status which is rather interesting I think.

ANSPACHER: It was. As I say, I think we were especially effective with the newspaper that we published out of Munich, “Die Neue Zeitung.” And with RIAS, the radio in the American sector of Berlin. We had some very good people then who were knowledgeable about Germany and in the language. I'm thinking particularly of Bobby Lochner, for example. And there were others, Gerry Gert, Ernie Weiner, for example. So we had some good people there and we worked very well.

Mickey Boerner, of course, knew Germany quite well and spoke the language. Joe Phillips did not speak the language and relied to a larger extent on me and a couple of others. His deputy didn't speak any German either and didn't know Germany. His deputy was the late Jack McDermott. Jack and I had our personality problems, but that's beside the point. We had in terms of individuals, if you care about individuals in USIA—

Q: Yes.

ANSPACHER: —one of the two or three best administrative people we've ever had in the Agency, at least with whom I've had the pleasure of working. One is yourself. And the other I'm thinking of is Jim Hoofnagle who managed to keep that octopus-like affair in some kind of reasonable shape. We had several branch posts, and the “America House” concept, which more or less started then, has been terribly valuable because the Germans have congregated in the America Houses and have continued to participate in them albeit they are now operating under German aegis. Granted, they were at the time of their institution about the only libraries that were available to the German people. But the fact that they are still in existence, despite the fact that they've now been overtaken, perhaps, by university libraries which had been re-established in the past quarter century is a tribute to their effectiveness. I still think the America Houses were a major contribution to our success and continue to be.

Transfer to Cambodia: 1956

I left Germany, at the behest of the Agency to go to Cambodia as Public Affairs Officer, which was my first PAO post. I had never been to Asia. My only real qualification for the job was my language, since French is the language—the lingua franca—in that part of Southeast Asia. This was a novel experience: crossing the Pacific for the first time in my life, going into an area that I knew nothing about, where I felt the only rationale for my being there was that I could get along and could find my way around. I also knew something about the information business and the propaganda business. I insist this is what we have been in all these years, despite the fact that a lot of people raise their eyebrows when we say “propaganda.” I did wonder what I was letting my family in for; I had no idea. The American Ambassador to Cambodia at the time was Robert McClintock. You have to be a certain kind of person to get along with the late Rob McClintock. He and I had our problems. But I had more problems with members of his staff than I did with him, really.

There we had another kind of effectiveness on a much lower scale of sophistication. We were back to the horse-and-buggy stage in many instances, for distribution of our product. Our entire films and publication distribution problem was solved by boat, for example. We'd go up the rivers and the canals to distribute the publications and show films that were done in French mostly, more than in Khmer, the native language of Cambodia, although eventually we had them translated into Khmer. We depended to a large degree on the Manila Reproduction Center for our magazines. At that time—I think this is no longer true—we had to depend entirely on calligraphy for preparing our magazines. They were all done by hand, letter by letter, phrase by phrase, which is how Khmer is written. Now there is a Khmer-language typewriter.

Q: Was the level of literacy in Cambodia such that the magazine was reasonably effective do you think?

ANSPACHER: Only to the upper level of individuals to whom we could have appealed in French. I don't think too many of the peasants, who made up the majority of the population, read even their own language. So going to the trouble of writing in calligraphy may have been a waste of time. But it was something I inherited. And since it was only a monthly magazine, we were under no time-pressure. We were not trying to do anything overnight with the Wireless File. We were doing features, in an attractive way, I do believe.

We used to joke about this but it's perfectly true. The magazine was usual taken apart and used to paper the inside of the walls of the bamboo shacks in which the peasants lived which means they probably got only half of what we were trying to say, because the other half was up against the inside of the wall. If they looked at it long enough and were attracted by the pictures, they might try to figure out what the words meant. Effective? I don't know. How to you tell? I've always had a particular feeling about how to test effectiveness. We'll get to that later on if you're still interested.

We had some effect in terms of impressing the people with who we were. We were not the French, because only a handful of us spoke enough French to get along and it wasn't French-French. It was American French, with all due respect to those who spoke it. The Cambodians knew we were not Russian. They knew we were not French. we must have been something else. And we showed the flag and explained why we were there and what we were trying to do. And if they listened and understood, yes, we were effective. But how do you test it? You ask them, they say “sure.”

Q: Did they have any — that you could measure — did they have any visible attitude towards the Americans as opposed to other nationalities? Or couldn't you judge that either?

ANSPACHER: No, I think this is generally true in Cambodia, Laos, Upper Burma, Upper Thailand. There is the word for the foreigner, the “farang.” And anybody who's white and large- nosed is a “farang.” But it would have taken more intensive questioning on their part for them to realize that we weren't from another planet. They'd been cut off from everybody but the French. And if we weren't French we must have been something other. It could have been anything. They had no so-called “attitudes” towards the Americans.

I think as the aid program progressed and we started to get those bags of wheat or whatever it was with the U.S. flag on them, the people began to make the connection between the “farang” who was talking about New York, Washington, President whatever, and then the flag. They kind of made a connection. But this was about as far as it went. I'm talking about the peasantry now.

Dealing with the Cambodia “elite” is another matter. There we had a little bit of a problem because there had been some infiltration by French communists, one of whom was the editor of the local paper published by the Ministry of Information. About the only way we could get anything into the newspaper, except the most innocuous little feature article, was by writing a letter to the editor.

And thereby hangs a rather sticky-wicket tale. You can edit this as you please. Our Political Officer, later an Ambassador, wrote quite fluent French. He and I had not got along for years. I had known him during the war when we also had had our differences. Well, I started a series of letters to the editor which were reasonably effective in the sense that at least they got published. At one point, he decided to take issue with something I had said, so he wrote his own letter to the editor, taking issue with me, by name. I went to the Ambassador and said, “Let's get our ducks in a row. This really isn't the way to do business. One of us is going to speak for the Embassy. You want him to do it, let him do it and I'll stop. But as long as I'm doing it, if I'm going to get shot down I'd rather be shop down by a Cambodian or something else, but not by one of my own colleagues.”

My “colleague” had not signed his own name. So whether or not is was he who had written this letter attacking me and my proposition was unclear until we found the carbon of his letter in his desk drawer. That was the evidence that I took to the Ambassador, who by that time was no longer Rob McClintock, but Carl Strom. Do you know Carl Strom?

Q: I met him when he was Ambassador to Korea.

ANSPACHER: Yes, he was Ambassador to Korea before he had come to Cambodia. He was a very fine person.

Q: A mathematician I believe.

ANSPACHER: A mathematician, an astronomer, and an orchid grower. If these are qualifications for an Ambassador, fine. He did rather well, because he struck a most undiplomatic note with Sihanouk. They just liked each other. They would talk about orchids and astronomy. And, of course, astronomy is something that the Cambodians can talk about because they gear a lot of their culture to the way the moon rises and sets and the way stars and planets move and the cattle eat or don't eat, on certain festival days. So

he and Sihanouk got along quite well despite the fact that Carl Strom spoke almost no French. Sihanouk spoke passable English.

One of the things about Sihanouk that I remember, as long as we're just recollecting here, was that I heard him conduct a conversation with Carl Strom and our Military Attach in English, with a Cambodian aide to Sihanouk in Khmer, and with me in French, simultaneously. All three languages at once. I always had a great respect for Sihanouk. He was awfully hard to deal with. But I have felt for years that he probably is the only person who's ever going to get Cambodia out of the mess it's in now. How he's going to do it I'm not sure. And he was not the same kind of — I'll use the phrase and you can edit it out if you want — he's not the same kind of SOB, our SOB, as Ngo Dinh Diem was. Awfully hard guy to deal with, mercurial, unlike Diem who was diabolic. But Sihanouk was mercurial. You never knew which way he was going to go. But we got along quite well, Sihanouk and the American Embassy, generally speaking. We got along better under Carl Strom than we did under Rob McClintock because they were two different kinds of people.

Let me see. We made several good friends in Cambodia. We tried hard to project not only American culture but other western cultures, too. For example, we once had a Christmas choral singing Handel's “Hallelujah Chorus.”

Q: Was Sihanouk Catholic as many of those upper class were?

ANSPACHER: No, he was not. He was Buddhist, deeply Buddhist. As I say, Carl Strom's wife had organized a “Hallelujah Chorus” for Christmas, in which guests from other western Embassies participated. Everybody invited sever Cambodians, those who might understand what the “Hallelujah Chorus” was all about. I had invited the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, French-educated, a lovely person. We went to his house for dinner down the street. The dinner, I might say, was almost inedible but then most Cambodian meals were. You know, when you see the rice for dessert crawling along the plate, you begin to wonder.

Q: Yes!

ANSPACHER: On the way over to the Ambassador's home for the concert, I was trying to explain to the Chief Justice about Handel and the “Hallelujah Chorus.” And I thought I had made my point until he turned to me and said, “That's all very interesting. Will Mr. Handel be there tonight?”

At which point I was absolutely speechless. The last 15 minutes of conversation had absolutely gone over his head. He didn't have the foggiest notion of what I was talking about. I said I didn't think so; he was otherwise occupied. A lovely evening was enjoyed by all.

The Soviet Defector

Now, as to effectiveness, I have another anecdote. Towards the end of my career there we were at a Country Team meeting one morning when the Ambassador's secretary stepped in and spoke not only to the Ambassador but to the (CIA) Station Chief. It seems we had a Soviet defector in the front office. He wanted out of the Soviet embassy. After considerable maneuvering for a day and a half, he was sequestered in the Station Chief's home, which was down the street from mine. Eventually, a day or two later, he was spirited out of the country in the trunk of a car. He was driven to Saigon and flown to Rome and on tot he United States. I found out these details after I had come back tot he U.S. in conversations with aforementioned Station Chief, who by that time was also back in Washington. I asked how this had all come about and how it all had worked out. Well, he said it didn't work out as well as CIA would have liked. This guy finally wanted to go back because the Russians were holding his wife and daughter and they weren't going to let them go. CIA had got everything they wanted out of him and so they let him go back, I was told.

I asked, “What did you get out of him?” He said, “Well, not an awful lot. You might be interested, however,, you personally might be interested, in his comments about USIS.

This defector had said that, in the American Embassy in Phnom Penh the one agency or element of the American Embassy with which the Russians were most concerned, in terms of its effectiveness on the Cambodian elite, was USIS." I said, "I wish I could use that, but I'm not quite sure how." Is it good or bad that the Soviets think we're good? But I thought that was an interesting comment. If they thought we were effective we probably were because they were very sensitive to effectiveness.

The "Laid Back" Life of Cambodians

I rather liked the Cambodian people. They had a wonderful relaxed attitude about them. I've always felt that if you did it right in Cambodia you could wear a pair of shorts and sit by the side of the river. If you waited long enough you could feed yourself. Sit under a palm tree to shade yourself from the sun and the rain. Coconuts would drop in your lap. Fish would jump into your lap. You'd scratch the earth and drop a kernel of rice and you could eat for the rest of your life. You really didn't have to do anything. And that's about the way the Cambodians operated.

But they thought the westerners, the French particularly and I guess we too, kind of "nuts" for running around the way we did and getting all excited about things. They didn't get that excited about things. If they had grievances they went to see Sihanouk's father, the king, and told him. They'd all gather there once a month, a fantastic fascinating sight. They'd all line up to go into the palace one by one and do their obeisances and tell the king what was wrong. It could have been a land dispute or a man wife dispute or the children, anything. The King would sit there and listen and wave a wand or give an order and things would get fixed. And this seemed to be a pretty reasonable way to run a government. It might even work in our country.

The Cambodian experience was my first introduction really to operating a whole program. We had little or no radio output. We showed films but we didn't make any. We had our monthly magazine, but nothing on a daily basis, because getting a newspaper or a new

bulletin out on a daily basis would have been a waste of time. We didn't try to “compete” with daily new on any regular basis unless it was terribly important. If there was a matter at the United Nations or in the United States Congress that was particularly germane to Cambodian livelihood or the Cambodian future, we would put out a special release. Only on rare occasions would it be printed. But at least we put out enough copies so that we could distribute it to certain so-called “elite” individuals.

Q: Were there any daily newspapers in Cambodia at all?

ANSPACHER: No, there was a four-page weekly and that's about all. It looked very much like our high school newspapers used to look, maybe better written, but the typography was not much better.

And there was almost no radio. Those few homes which had receivers listened to Cambodian broadcasts from Saigon radio. The government thought it had a radio broadcast capability, but it was so old and so badly equipped and so out of whack most of the time that they were off the air more than they were on. I suppose that if Sihanouk or the King had something to say, the station would somehow get up enough current and enough technical capabilities to put the Prince or his father on the air, a very practical way to program. The rest of the time neither the station nor the “audience” seemed to care much.

Now, USIS of course, had a branch post in Battambang, up at the head of the Mekong River.

Q: That wasn't Siem Reap was it?

ANSPACHER: Yes, it was up near Siem Reap, near the sit of the ancient ruins of Angkor Wat. As a matter of fact, the PAO's wife was usually detailed to take whoever happened to be in town, from the Deputy Director of USIS to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far

Eastern Affairs, up to Angkor Wat. So the PAO's wife got to know more about Angkor Wat than she really ever wanted to.

But we used to go to Siem Reap just so that we could say that we'd been there. I had to go to the branch post from time to time at Battambang. We had a nice little operation there, very low key. We had exhibits in the windows and this was about all we did. Our branch PAO talked to as many people as he could, provincial governors and so forth.

We also had six English teachers, from the English teaching branch of USIS.

They were out in the countryside. We have had some trouble with teachers who are on contract. They're never quite convinced that they “belong” to the American Embassy. The American Ambassador really does have the right and the authority to do with them as he pleases if they run afoul of his policies. So we had a little problem with them, but really not much.

The Value of English Teachers as Reporters of Cambodian Public Opinion

Anyway, we had these six English teachers, who were very helpful to our program. I found that if you could keep them on a reasonably straight and reasonably narrow path, so they didn't stray too far afield from what they were supposed to be doing, they were probably the best public opinion analysts we had in countries like this.

Q: That's very interesting.

ANSPACHER: I have always found that you could use these kinds of person-to-person contact people, without making it obvious that you were using them. It's what I call the “old envelope” technique of public opinion testing. For example: Don't carry a clip board and don't ask a series of questions. Get into conversations and as soon as you get back to where you are staying put he notes down on the back of an old envelope and send them to

me. I don't care what form they're in. You can write them in Khmer if you want to. Just your impression of what this guy was saying when you talked with him.

Q: I suppose it's because an English instructor finds that people who are taking their lessons are really interested. They will enter into a conversation voluntarily and by virtue of extended conversational exposures a camaraderie develops between people and then you can pick up things that you yourself might not expect you were going to pick up. But you get them in conversation.

ANSPACHER: Yes, and they will ask questions. How do you say “communism” in English? You know, that kind. Why do you want to say it? Also the English teachers did not live in Phnom Penh proper. They lived out in the countryside, at some risk to their intestines I'm sure, if not their sanity. They lived with the people and they made friends and they talked with them—about anything and everything. That's what I wanted to find out: what these people were thinking and/or saying. They would talk about their crops but they also talked about “government.” They talked about the economy, albeit on a limited scale. To them the economy was how much does rice cost and how much can I get?

I want to make this patently clear. This was not an intelligence-gathering operation. It was just public opinion testing, public opinion polling so to speak, albeit not in terms of statistics. I didn't think that was important. What was important was what are people saying if you talk with them without the clipboard.

Now, this is very much an aside. It has nothing to do with me. I am pretty well persuaded that if we had the capability of infiltrating — I'm not sure this ought to be on the tape. Suppose we had somebody who could pass as a “contra” today live “fight” with the “contras” for a week and a half, I wonder what we would find out about the commitment of those guys to what we think they're fighting for. Do they consider themselves “freedom fighters?” Leaving aside the former Somoza guardsmen, are they in it for the cigarettes, the food, the wherewithal and the fun of firing weapons? I don't know. But I'm not at all

convinced that they are absolutely persuaded of the rightness of Mr. Reagan's “freedom fighters” war. That's beside the point. Anyway, that kind of public opinion analysis or reporting I find more valuable than all the structured studies that we have perhaps carried out.

Q: Certainly I think it is so far as that kind of people are concerned.

ANSPACHER: Yes. I'll get to another experience of that nature in Ethiopia. I frequently tried to persuade agronomists and cattle farmers and veterinarians and brick makers, teaching people how to do this and that. These are Americans who also sit around in the evening with nothing else to do and talk with the local populace. I said I'll give you all the old envelopes you want if you only use the back of them. Every week or ten days when you come back here for a fresh suit of clothes turn in the old envelopes. Let me see what these people are talking about. To some extent it worked, not always. AID people were frequently either un-understanding, or felt it was an intelligence-gathering operation with which they didn't want to get involved. I tried to explain the difference between that and intelligence; sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

Anyway, my experience in Cambodia came to an end largely because I appealed to the Agency after whatever two or two and a half years. We had adopted our little girl in Germany. She was still a citizen of Germany and I wanted to get her naturalized. I thought that I had better get her back to the United States before she got too much further away from the age at which I could do that without complications. She was still only four or five. So we came back for a tour with USIA as editor of the Far Eastern Press Service.

Q: What were the years that you were in Cambodia?

ANSPACHER: I've got to reconstruct that now. It must have been — let's see. Eisenhower was in office in '52. So it must have been, say, '56 to '58.

1958-'60, Agency Press Service Editor

So from 1958 to 1960 I was editor of the Far Eastern Press Service. That was, of course, my metier. I'd been a newspaper man, as I say, so I felt really at home doing that. There was nothing particularly outstanding about that, it got to be rather routine. But it was there that I began to learn more about Southeast Asian problems, Saigon and Vietnam in particular. Chet Opal was then the PAO in Saigon. Bob Spear had been PAO there when I was in Cambodia. Bobby Lochner had been his deputy and had inherited the job briefly. When Bobby left, Chet Opal became PAO, so that when I was tapped for Saigon it was to replace Chet.

I think I did one thing in the press service that apparently my predecessor had not done. I guess I got some good marks from some PAOs for that. I found when I opened the bottom drawer of the desk I inherited from my predecessor, stacks of field messages, requests for publications or copyrights, feature stories, etc. I asked the secretary, “What are these doing here?” She said that they had come in from the field over the past year or so. “Well, what are they doing here?” I asked again. “Your predecessor,” she said, “just filed them in the desk drawer.” “Didn't he ever do anything about them?” “No.” She said his attitude was — and this will strike a certain note — his attitude was that the field gets “what Washington says it gets” and that's it. Never mind what the field thinks it wants or needs, “We'll tell 'em what they're going to use.” So he dropped all the field request messages in the bottom drawer and let them sit there. Well, I dug them all out and tried to answer as many of them as I could. I thought having been a PAO which my predecessor had not been and never was, I could make sense out of these field requests and deal with them.

Anyway, his attitude towards the field was “they take what they get.” My attitude was “you give them what they need because they're out there trying to do the job.”

Transfer to Saigon: 1960

I spent a year and a half, two years there trying to backstop the Far East PAOs. All of a sudden, in early 1960 somebody said “Saigon” and I jumped at it. So off I went to Saigon,

stopping en route at the Far East PAO conference in Manila before I even got to the post. The then-deputy PAO/Saigon, Herb Baumgartner, who had been in Korea, had come down to hold the fort between Chet Opal and me. He came to meet me at the conference. They used to hold our PAO conferences in Baguio, the hill station outside of Manila, which was very nice. And what a collection of old timers there were there! Hank Miller's now dead. So is Harry Casler. I don't know where Dick McCarthy is.

Q: Dick is in Washington.

ANSPACHER: Dick is in Washington? Straightened out I hope.

Q: Who knows?

ANSPACHER: Who knows. Bob Clark.

Q: Bob is dead.

ANSPACHER: Bob is dead. Dear me.

Q: He was my deputy in Thailand.

ANSPACHER: Bob Clark had this interesting Chinese-language thing, I guess, of always, not always but frequently, phrasing his sentences as if it were a question. Like, “it's going to rain tonight?”

Q: Invariably. His conversation invariably ended as a question.

ANSPACHER: Fascinating.

Q: Rising inflection.

ANSPACHER: It must have been the Chinese which he learned as a child. Anyway, they were a bunch of old timers, including a fellow named Powell who was an ex-Marine. I've forgotten his first name.

Q: Ralph?

ANSPACHER: Yes, Ralph Powell.

Q: He later taught at the War College.

ANSPACHER: Later taught at the War College. He was considerably older than most of us.

Q: Terribly shot up as a Marine, too.

ANSPACHER: Yes. He had been Naval Attach# in Shanghai or in Beijing at one time.

Q: I don't know exactly how much we lost when the leader came on at the end of that tape, but just to review a moment, we were talking about Ralph Powell, who had been a Marine Corps Officer and also taught at the War College and had been—what was it he was in China?

ANSPACHER: He had been Naval Attach# to the last American Embassy in China before we pulled out.

Q: So Ralph was a real Chinese expert and, as I say, taught at the National War College. He died a few years ago and I think it was a great loss. Okay, let's pick up from there.

ANSPACHER: There is another chap who was with us and you know him, too. He had been PAO in Tokyo. Great big tall fellow, red hair.

Q: Willard Hanna?

ANSPACHER: No, not Willard Hanna. Had a three-syllable last name, I think.

Q: Bradford?

ANSPACHER: Not Bradford, no. Now this was considerably later. Well, anyway, whoever. Those were the real old-timers, I guess, a lot of us anyway. Jack O'Brien was there, and Bill Copeland. I had known Bill in the United Press days and he and I were great friends. And Harry Casler, who is also now dead. He lived in Ireland. He and I corresponded for a while. He had been PAO in Indonesia.

Q: He'd also been in Caracas. I don't know where he was before that.

ANSPACHER: Well he came to Baguio as PAO, in Indonesia, I think. Those were the "good old days." Anyway, I pick up a whole Saigon thread from Baumgartner at the Baguio conference. George Allen was then the director of USIS. He apparently knew Chet Opal because he said to me, "I gather you have a document that Mr. Baumgartner, your deputy, has brought with him: Chet Opal's presentation." I said, "yes," pulling this thing out of a briefcase; it was inches thick. George Allen apparently knew Chet Opal. He said, "See if you can get that down to about five minutes, will you?" I looked at it and tried to boil it down. I've forgotten now what was in it. It was a status report and it was well done. Very good for my purposes but a little bit too much for the PAO conference.

After the conference I went on to Saigon. We were not yet in the psychological operations programs that Barry Zorthian eventually ran from the USIS base. It was a more or less normal USIS operation. I guess the biggest thing we had the first year I was there was the 1960 presidential elections, the election of John F. Kennedy. We ran that as a kind of "election special" for USIS, inviting a lot of people in, keeping the tote board, explaining who Kennedy was, and so forth. That was kind of exciting, because all of us realized that we were getting somebody in the White House who apparently had some charisma, at

least. We had a feeling, as everybody did at the time, that we were perhaps opening a new era in U.S. relations with the rest of the world, as well as with our own people.

Close Relationship with Ministry of Information

We made kind of a three-way connection with the AID information people and the Ministry of Information in Vietnam, as we had tried to do in Cambodia, but in Phnom Penh it wasn't really very effective because there wasn't much of a ministry. In Vietnam there was more of a ministry. They had learned considerably more from the French about how to establish a Ministry of Information and what such a Ministry should do.

They could never quite understand that the United States didn't have a Ministry of Information. We are one of the few countries in the world which does not have one. But in most developing countries, the official attitude is that every government needs a Ministry of Information. The concept of press releases and press conferences, of course, was absolutely foreign to the Vietnamese. We tried to address that problem although I didn't think that the palace in Saigon ever gave a press conference. It would never have occurred to them. We did, however, get the Minister himself to give press conferences from time to time. That was a change. So we had some influence on how they worked.

I brought whatever professional background I could to bear on the AID operation, using it as a liaison to the Information Ministry. One of our USIS press staff and the AID information “advisor” shared an office at the Ministry of Information which was fine, providing for a two-way liaison and cross-fertilization of ideas and programs and projects. I guess our USIS films office, perhaps more than any other, worked most closely with the Vietnamese Ministry of Information. We had the capability, the professional know how and to a large degree the technical apparatus with which to make films of use to them as well as to us.

Q: Were these shown in a field program? Did they get out into the boondocks at that time?

ANSPACHER: Yes, they did. They would go out largely by vehicle. Compared to Phnom Penh, Saigon was a million dollar operation. We had a whole building to ourselves with almost all the equipment, including vehicles, we needed. In Phnom Penh, we had half a floor, plus a library. But in Saigon we were a big thing, and we got to be very well-known. We were located in an absolutely magnificent place, right on the main corner of Saigon across the way from a large, modern hotel and down the street from the Parliament building. It was a stone's throw from the Palace. We made very good contact with the Ministries of Education and Information. They had a Ministry of Cultural Affairs too, where we also had some very good friends. I think we had some impact, certainly in Saigon, until "impact" became a matter of "how many Viet Cong did you kill today?" At that point our kind of impact was beside the point. All we had to do was talk anti-communist to be on the side of the angels, presumably.

At the time I was there, before the U.S. got into the kind of combat we eventually did, I think we did manage to inculcate the Vietnamese with some ideas about how the United States worked, particularly in the media area, and in some measure: democracy. Now, Ngo Dinh Diem himself was not a democrat by any means. He was about as autocratic and dictatorial as anybody could be. He has a brother and a sister-in-law who, with him, managed to run that country.

Q: Along with Madame Diem?

ANSPACHER: Well, his sister-in-law, Madame Nhu. She was the wife of the brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu. She's still alive, so far as I know for what that's worth, somewhere in France, I think. Diem and his brother, Nhu, of course, are dead.

Shortcomings of Ambassador Nolting

Our principal problem, as is frequently the case—I'm sure it is in a place like South Africa—was to present our concepts of democracy and political and economic theory and

practice in the face of the dictatorial oppression that Diem laid on his people. We were fighting not so much ignorance or communism as the Mandarin in the palace. We had to be careful not to fight him outright or our Ambassador would hear about it. This was Elbridge Durbrow, at first, when Frederick Nolting. Durbrow was a very experienced diplomat who “took nothing from anybody,” having worked in Moscow with Kennan and Bohlen and that crowd. He was used to a tough turf and he handled it very well. He and I had some differences but who doesn't? When we got to “Fritz” Nolting, who was Durbrow's successor, it was a different ballgame. He could not bring himself to raise his voice effectively against Diem on behalf of the United States. I found that disappointing and perhaps disastrous.

[Aside.] I found out considerably later that the appointment of Fritz Nolting to Saigon happened in the most bizarre way—according to the report I have—which may be apocryphal, but it's a great story. It is that President Kennedy, in the days between the election and the inauguration, sent Walt Rostow to the State Department to find Ambassadors for Southeast Asia, one for Bangkok, one for Saigon. Among the people Rostow talked to was a man named Bill Lacy, whom you may know. Bill Lacy had been very prominent in Southeast Asian affairs before the war. His wife wrote “The King and I,” among other things. He spoke Thai. He spoke Lao. He spoke some Vietnamese.

Well, Bill Lacy and a lot of other people told Rostow that the man for Saigon was Kenneth Todd Young, who was not a career Foreign Service Officer. He had been with Standard Oil in Southeast Asia. He knew Diem and he knew Saigon and Vietnam. They said Young is the man for Saigon—very strong, very knowledgeable, just the right choice. For the other side of the coin, Bangkok, they advised Rostow, take Frederick Nolting, a career Foreign Service Officer.

Somewhere between Foggy Bottom and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, I have heard, those names were switched. Kenneth Young went to Bangkok. Fritz Nolting went to Saigon. I maintain to this day that if that had not happened, the course of events in Southeast

Asia might have been changed. Kenneth Young was a completely different person. He would not for a moment taken a lot of the guff that Diem handed Nolting and which Nolting swallowed hook, line and sinker, I'm afraid.

I'll give you another anecdote. Once, when things seemed to be going badly for the South Vietnamese, I went to a dinner meeting of the Rotary Club, as a guest. After the meeting, six or seven prominent Vietnamese who were also members of Rotary came up to me and said they'd like to talk to me.

These were people who were known as loyal South Vietnamese, the “loyal opposition.” They were not North Vietnamese agents so far as I know. They said they wanted very much to talk to Ambassador Nolting. Things are going from bad to worse, they said. He's got to take a stand with Diem. We can't get in to see him, they said.

The next time I saw the Ambassador, I reported this conversation. I said I think these people just want to talk to you. I don't know what they have in mind, but they're honestly concerned about the way their country is going down the drain. They are loyal but they are in opposition. And they want to talk to you. I think you ought to see them at your residence, not here in the Embassy, not in the Chancery. The Ambassador disagreed. He said the president wouldn't like it. At that point it suddenly struck me what was wrong with this whole situation. “Which president,” I asked. “President Diem,” he replied. I said, “Mr Ambassador, you don't work for President Diem. It doesn't make any difference whether he likes it or not. What matters is the president you work for—Kennedy.” But he wouldn't do it; he never did see them.

Well, things like this made me wonder how the course of history as we know it now might have changed if we'd had different people there. The Ambassador never really understood I'm afraid what was happening.

After we were all back [in Washington] a group of us Country Team Members, absent the Ambassador (the CIA Station Chief, William Colby, Political Officer, Joe Mendenhall,

myself, the Military Attach#, and Bill Jorden, a special assistant to Averell Harriman) went to see Walt Rostow at the White House. Do you know Bill Jorden?

Q: Oh, yes. Very well.

ANSPACHER: He must be a neighbor of yours or almost, isn't he? He lives out in Virginia somewhere.

Q: No, he lives in the District now.

ANSPACHER: We tried to convince Walt Rostow that things were going from bad to worse under Fritz Nolting. He simply wasn't making any progress. Every time he went over to the Palace he was given a shopping list and he never argued about it. He never tried to tell Diem what was right and what was wrong.

Anyway, that's all really beside the point. Were we in USIS effective? We were up to the point of our getting into the war, when it became academic as to whether we were effective in promoting American and United States policies and so forth. Our job from that time on was to defeat the Communists from North Vietnam. And we had to go along with whatever seemed to be pointing in that direction.

General Paul Harkings, MAAG Commander, Sabotages Psychological Operations Coordinating Committee

During my stay in Saigon, we organized what eventually became the Psychological Operations Coordinating Committee. We had representatives from CIA, MAAG (Military Assistance Group), AID, and the Embassy political section. We had a pretty good little committee dealing largely with what the military was doing in psychological warfare, with the USIS and CIA support.

But it was until I got back to this country and ran into the officer who had been the liaison between MAAG and USIS that I realized that MAAG had never really been a member of

our Committee; that this major was under orders from his commanding general to tell us nothing and to agree to nothing and to distance himself from everything we were doing. I had kind of suspected this might be the case. But I had never seen it or heard it spelled out that way. I think I was out of the Agency by that time. But in any event I think I reported this conversation to the Assistant Director.

Q: Who was it that told you this?

ANSPACHER: This was a man named Major Bartz, B-A-R-T-Z. He was a pretty decent guy. I've forgotten his first name. He had been the liaison between MAAG and USIS and it was General (Paul) Harkings who had given him direct orders to distance himself from our committee, provide no information, offer no assistance, agree to nothing, tell us nothing. Great way to run a coordinating committee!

Vietnam Period Anecdotes

Let's see what else. There are a lot of little anecdotes about the Saigon period. We almost killed Paul Neilson, for instance.

Q: Was he there as Press Officer?

ANSPACHER: No, he was Deputy Assistant Director for Far East and he came out on an inspection trip once.

Q: That's right. He was at that time. Ken Bruce, I guess was the Assistant Director for Far East. Paul died not too long after that.

ANSPACHER: Paul Neilson. Yes, I know. I rather liked Paul. Paul and I got along quite well.

Q: I first knew him in Indonesia.

ANSPACHER: Paul had a good friend on my staff named Ed Robinson. Do you know Ed Robinson?

Q: The name sounds familiar but I don't think so.

ANSPACHER: He's been in and out of the Agency. He was our Press Officer at the time, working for an Information Officer who was less capable than he. So he was suffering more or less visibly under that situation.

My deputy was Herb Baumgartner, who'd come down from Korea, a fine officer. He wanted very much to be a PAO and I don't think he ever made it. He felt that he ought to be PAO because he'd been deputy in Korea. He felt that he ought to have his own post.

Q: Is this Ev Bumgardner or Herb Baumgartner?

ANSPACHER: Herb.

Q: Herb was later deputy in Thailand but I don't think he was ever a PAO.

ANSPACHER: He never quite made it to the alter. I think he resented that a little bit. Ev Bumgardner's a different person. Spells his name differently and was a different type entirely. He had no illusions about being a PAO. He was a photographer and reporter and he also became a Vietnam expert of some sorts didn't he? Or Philippine expert.

Q: He's out of the Agency now.

ANSPACHER: Oh, yes. I think he was a photographer or artist or reporter or something. I think he worked largely for the Regional Service Center in Manila. Anyway, Ev was never on my staff.

This was Herb Baumgartner. Herb was Deputy PAO. Information Officer was Howard Caulkins. Films Officer was Dave Sheppard, whom I had insisted on keeping despite the

fact that I had had pressure from Washington to take someone whom Washington wanted. Washington being — who was our great films man in Washington for a while, later became an Ambassador?

Q: Turner Shelton.

ANSPACHER: Turner Shelton wanted some friend of his to come down from Laos to be Films Officer. But I was very pleased with Dave. I liked his attitude; his background seemed fine. He seemed to be doing a good job. So we kept him on. And I just turned Turner Shelton down. I do not regret it. And Turner and I may never have got along but that's all right. Turner's dead now, isn't he?

Q: He's dead now.

ANSPACHER: Well, it doesn't make any difference, does it? Anyway, Dave was the Films Officer. His assistant was a man named Douglas Pike, of whom you may have heard, the resident United States expert on the North Vietnam psyche, a venture which he started with a little cubbyhole of an officer and a Vietnamese secretary. Now he's developed this profession of being a Vietnam “expert.” More power to him.

The Information Officer, Howard Caulkins, was a fine, nice guy, a sweet guy — and I use the word sweet advisably. Almost never lost his temper. Never got excited. He was not terribly imaginative but he did his job in a very routine, pedantic, by the book way. He did what he was asked to do, did it reasonably well, but not with an awful lot of verve. The verve in the Information Office belonged to Ed Robinson, who suffered from ignominy, if you will, of working for a man to whom he was intellectually and perhaps even professionally superior and than whom he was more capable.

Ed Robinson and Paul Neilson were very close friends from their Burma days when Paul had been PAO in Rangoon. So they were thick as thieves. This got a little bit embarrassing

because Paul really put me in a spot when he came to me. Ed Robinson had gone to Paul about his problems on my staff.

Paul came to me about them. But there wasn't anything I could do without making a drastic change which he had to do. I couldn't do it. The Area Director had to move people around, either remove Ed and transfer him or remove Ed's boss. I couldn't really initiate it without causing more trouble than it was worth. Well, as a result, I guess of this, on night Ed got a little bit exuberant about things and attacked me personally and physically which I felt was terribly unfortunate, because he didn't really know what he was doing. Both he and Paul came to me later and apologized; Paul had heard about the incident, not from me but from Ed.

As I told Paul, I had a perfect right at that point to ask for Ed out of there. It would have ruined his career if I'd written it the way I could have. I preferred to talk to Paul about it and let Paul straighten out Ed and let us go on with a person who was a valuable member of the staff. And he was valuable. He did a good job. And that's the way it was all solved. Since then Ed and I have become quite close whenever we see each other, from time to time, in Washington.

Whom else did we have? We had some good Administrative Officers, some very good ones. People who in the best code of administrative procedure start by nodding their heads instead of shaking their heads. This is the way I judge an Administrative Officer. For instance, Jim Hoofnagle would say, “Let's see what we can do about it” instead of saying “No, that's impossible.” There have been some like that. But I had some good administrative people who understood the rules of the game but also knew how to find the loopholes in them. And we had a pretty good operation, in Saigon Budgeted I guess, at about a million dollars annually.

Also, we had a good Country Team in Saigon. My personal relations with the Ambassador were fine until—but this gets a little bit ahead of the story—there began to be a large influx

of American troupes. It was quite obvious; all we had to do was stand on a major street corner with a counter and figure that out there were more than the 688 “advisors” that were officially allowed by treaty.

One day two correspondents came to me and said, “We know, because it has been leaked out of Washington, that there is a “baby flattop” carrying helicopters and American troops, coming into a port down in the south of Vietnam.” They said they would like to go aboard that vessel, to meet her and come up the river with her.

I suggested they talk to the Ambassador about it. We talked and we had an exchange of cables with Washington. As a result the Ambassador ruled out the proposed press trip. Now, because I could see the newsmen's point, this demonstrated one of the problems a former professional media man faces in a PAO job. There have been others like this, too. One finds oneself on both sides of the desk at the same time. I knew these correspondents were right. I knew what they wanted to do. I knew they were basing their requests on good information. But I had to stand on a policy decision that didn't make much sense. Somehow it had leaked out of Washington or out of San Francisco. Everybody knew it. It was in the public domain. Yet we had this hard and fast policy decision we could not confirm or deny that there was such a ship.

Then these two reporters, who up to that time had been reasonably good friends of mine (because I tried to keep these guys, some of whom I had known professionally before, on good terms), reported back to their newspapers (the Chicago Daily News and U.S. News and World Report) that I was being obstructionist, impossible to deal with, a discredit to the government.

Pierre Salinger, The New Press Attach# , Events Leading to Anspacher's Departure from Saigon

As a result, who should show up on the scene from a distance but Pierre Salinger, who decided that, “something had to be done about this guy Anspacher.” The first thing

Salinger did, or somebody did, I guess it was Salinger, was to sent out to Saigon a special Press Attach# , a man named Davis. Impossible guy. I don't think he'd ever been in the Agency.

He walked into my office and said, “I'm your new Press Attach# .” He didn't really say “I'm your new Press Attach# .” He said, “I am the Ambassador's Press Attach# .” This was news to me. I'd never heard of him. He put his feet up on my desk and said, “Now, let's get things straight.” Well, it seems the Ambassador had had a cable from Washington (signed Salinger) appointing this guy as the Ambassador's own Press Attach# with no relation to me, no responsibility to me.

I called the Ambassador and asked, “What am I supposed to do with this Davis?” “Cooperate with him,” the Ambassador replied. Judging by the way he has started, it wasn't going to be easy, because he (Davis) had started off by saying, “Now, the thing we've got to do with these correspondents is get them laid. Get them drunk and get them laid, preferably with American secretaries,” he said, looking around my outer office.

“We've really got a handful here,” I said to myself. To him, I said, “We'd better understand each other. Either you're going to work with me or I'm going to have nothing to do with you and I'm going to tell Washington that you are completely on your own. If the Ambassador wants to put up with this kind of nonsense that's up to him. But I'm not going to. And I'm not going to have you responsible to me and conduct yourself any old way you please. So let's make an arrangement.” He said, “Well, that's fine. I'll go off and work for the Ambassador.” I think I wrote a memorandum of conversation for the record stipulating that I took no responsibility for Davis and/or his activities.

The next thing that happened was that there was one of those conferences in Hawaii with the President of South Vietnam and the high command of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and God knows who all, including the “Press Attach# “ from the Saigon Embassy. I thought maybe it would be I or maybe my Press Officer. Oh, no. It was this Davis who, I guess, got

all the correspondents drunk and laid. That's the was he handled press relations. Well, that wasn't the way I had been taught or experienced to do it.

As I said, I wrote an official memorandum of conversation disassociating myself and the U.S. Information Service from this guy no matter what Pierre Salinger said. And Mr. Murrow either took that under advisement, or swallowed it, or put it in the back of his hat.

Another such “memorandum of conversation” I wrote had been from Cambodia. We can back-track a little bit. I came in to our office one Monday morning in Phnom Penh to find waiting for me the pilot of our USIS power boat, which we used to take films and publications and whatever we had up the river to show the hoards of fascinated peasants who would gather on the shore—just as they did in the day of the old Mississippi steamboat.

The pilot came to me and said, “We've got to do something about this boat. The Ambassador ordered me and the boat out yesterday with 47 people aboard. That boat can't carry 47 people, especially if they're smoking the way they were smoking. I've got a full 55-gallon drum of gasoline on that craft. These people were all over that boat. I couldn't see where I was going. They were lying all over the boat, obstructing my vision and the running lights and so forth.

So I said, “We've got to do something about this.” It just so happened that the Naval Attach# from the Embassy in Saigon was also responsible for Cambodia since Cambodia didn't have much of a Navy. What it did have he could deal with. He was due in town the next week or so. When he got in I asked him to take a look at this boat and rate it for passengers. And he stipulated, 23 or 24 passengers with life preserves and that's all.

I went to the Ambassador as gently as I could, because talking with Rob McClintock this way was not the easiest thing in the world. I told him in words to this effect that something had to be done about this boat. It is rated for 24 people, I said, and that's all it can carry. “You really can't ask my pilot,” I continued—at this point he cut me off. He said, “I can ask

your pilot to do anything I damn well please at any time of the day or night with that boat which belongs to me." Wait a minute. We've got real problems here.

So my first "memorandum" to the Agency said, in effect: "Make up your mind whether this boat belongs to the Ambassador and he can do with it as he pleases, in which case you better absolve us of all responsibility, or it belongs to USIS, and you straighten this out back in Washington." Well, we did get that straightened out in favor of USIS. But it was touch and go for a few minutes.

Now back to Saigon. As I say, my second "memorable memo" had to do with this Press Attach# fellow. I don't know what ever happened to him. Because the end of our tour was approaching and I was due for home leave. Largely as a result of all of this, I think, Salinger had arranged with Deputy Director Don Wilson for John Mecklin to replace me.

There was a PAO conference between the time my orders came in and my date of departure on home leave. The Ambassador said he wanted me back. And I said, fine. I'll leave all my stuff here and I'll be back in two or three months and Herb Baumgartner will handle things. We're virtually in a war time situation anyway.

Q: Are you now back in Vietnam?

ANSPACHER: Oh, yes, we're in Vietnam now. This was shortly after my confrontation with the Salinger-anointed Press Attach# and the Hawaii conference. I was furious at the way this thing had been handled. And I had a feeling that Ed Murrow didn't know anything about it. Well, anyway, between the time I had my orders and the time I actually left on home leave we had a PAO conference at Baguio in the Philippines. I think it was a joint conference with ambassadors, too. I'm not sure.

In any event, Don Wilson had come out to the Baguio conference. He and I went out for dinner one evening, and he said, "We're replacing you in Saigon." I said, "How come? The Ambassador and I, at the last report which was two days ago, had arranged that I

would be back as soon as I could. He trusted Herb Baumgartner but not terribly far. And he wanted me back as quickly as possible. Wilson then said that the Ambassador doesn't know about this yet. But “we're doing it. That's just the way Salinger and we want it. He said John Mecklin would be my successor. I didn't know Mecklin but I knew of him. He had been a favorite of Don Wilson's when Don was an executive with Time magazine. And John had been, I think, either the Paris or Bonn bureau chief for Time, or both. He also had been in Saigon before. He had covered Saigon for Time. He knew the area. It was a good choice if the choice had to be made. He was not an Agency Officer. He was brought in from the outside.

But this was a shock to me, the way it was being done, and I felt it was being done because of what had happened with the two American correspondents. I thought this was unfair, that they had buckled under to the correspondents whereas I had stood with the policy.

I went to the Ambassador and asked if he had known about this. He said he had just had a cable about it. I said, “How do you feel about it?” He said, “Well, what can I do?” I said, “What can you do? You can object.” “Well,” he replied, “I don't really think I ought to.” At that point I was just fed up. It was really a terrible blow. I had wanted to come back to Saigon.

I don't know that Murrow knew about all this. Ed and I had been acquaintances for many years. When I did leave he called me on the phone in Hong Kong, to ask that I take over the counter-insurgency program. I rather suspect that it was a combination of Salinger's pressure on Wilson, maybe Mecklin himself — Mecklin reportedly had to get out of Paris for personal reasons which are not germane at all — I think Salinger was knuckling under to the correspondents' pressure.

Don Wilson was in a position to do something about John Mecklin's future—and mine —in response to the confrontation I had had with the correspondents in Saigon about

the incoming ship, which resulted in my being more or less “removed” from office. It had to do with Pierre Salinger's feelings about what had happened, and Don Wilson's interest in John Mecklin's future. They all came together and it seemed appropriate from Washington's point of view to replace me despite what the Ambassador had said he felt about it. And, of course, despite the way I felt about it. But there it was. There wasn't anything I could do except resign, which I would have done if it hadn't been for Edward R. Murrow, to whom I owed a certain loyalty just out of long-term friendship.

The experience in Saigon was one I would have wanted to extend because it was a fascinating exercise in the potential of propaganda, the potential of psychological operations (call it warfare or not as you please), which we had begun to conduct through our Operations Coordinating Committee. And eventually it got a lot of publicity, not so much under John Mecklin, whose tenure in Saigon was cut short because of ill health. Barry Zorthian became the great “psychological warrior” in Vietnam. I'm not sure that he invented most of the stuff that he lays claim to—or which is attributed to his having invented it.

Thus, the Vietnam experience had several high spots and that particular low spot. I guess one of the things which stands out in my mind is not only the election coverage which I've mentioned before—the election of John Kennedy—buy even more important, the assistance we provided to AID in training Vietnamese information people and correspondents, the guidance we were able to give them, the introduction to a “democraticness” we tried to provide for them.

The Vietnamese under Ngo Dinh Diem were not terribly fascinated by the idea of a free press as we know it. So I think we got some ideas across. But they were very rarely put into practice in the local press simply because of the control that was imposed by the Palace through the Ministry of Information. The minister himself I'm sure was not convinced of the role of a free press. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been the Minister of Information to begin with I would assume.

Lyndon Johnson's Visit to Saigon as Vice President

Then there was the visit of Vice President Lyndon Johnson—three days that shall live in infamy in my view. I don't know that I'll ever forget those three days. It started with the press plane being taken out of action in the Philippines. So the press had to get into the back of the Vice President's plane.

Upon it's arrival in Saigon, our problem immediately was to get the press off that plane before the Vice President got off, so they could do the coverage that was necessary. Fortunately, we were fairly good friends with the Pan Am operations officer and we arranged by radio for the pilot or somebody to jam that front door long enough for us to get the back door open and let the press get out and get around to where they could cover the Vice President coming down the stairway from the (by now) unjammed front door.

Then there was the problem of the cavalcade into town from Ton Son Nhut Airport. The Press Secretary for the Vice President, whose name was George Reedy, said, that Vice President's car will be at the head of the line and that's that. And I said that wouldn't do. The Palace, not Reedy, was running things at that point. We had a long set to at the back of the airport while Johnson was getting ready to get aboard his car. The motorcade was set up by the Diem Palace and no Vice President of no United States was going to change it just because he happened to feel like it.

I don't think I won that one but it wasn't easy. And I guess I made an enemy of that press secretary. The Secret Service agent, who later showed up on the rear bumper of the Kennedy car in Dallas (his name was Trueblood, I think), came up to me and said, “That guy's been giving us trouble the whole trip. You should have popped him one.”

Anyway, we got the motorcade into town and those three days began. One of the problems, as I think I've heard from other people who have experienced visits with this particular vice president, was that the only way to cover Lyndon Johnson is to have two

teams of still- and motion-picture photographers who “leapfrog,” with one team covering him at point A; the second team covering point B, while the A team goes on to point C, and so on.

Well, the Vice President kind of took a shine to Team A and when they didn't show up at Point B he raised Cain and had his Signal Corps man ask, “where's that guy who was doing the pictures at the last one?” I explained that he was at point C. The Signal Corps seemed never to have heard of this leapfrogging technique. We finally got that one hammered out, got the Signal Corps guy convinced. I don't know whether or not he ever convinced the Vice President.

But after the day was over the same Signal Corps officer came to me and he said, “Now, we ought to see the rushes—or “dailies” on this one tomorrow.” I said, “Where do you think you are? this is Saigon, Vietnam. These things have to go to Tokyo to be processed. There isn't any processing of color film short of Tokyo.” He said, “Don't be ridiculous. I want these in my hands tomorrow morning.” I said, “Fine. You sit there and wait for them; I'll get them to you when I get them.” So we had that little set-to. These were I tell you, three days that shook my world.

A day or so later, of course, was the farewell dinner which the Vietnamese hosted at the Palace. Everybody went in his bib and tucker and everybody there on the Embassy staff had a job. Mine was to act as interpreter for Mrs. Johnson and Madam Nhu, the President's sister-in-law, wife of Ngo Nhu.

In the meantime, the USIS staff was working up the Vietnamese, French and Chinese versions of the joint Ngo-Johnson communique which had been agreed upon earlier in the day. The staff was back at the office under Herb Baumgartner's direction. When that interpreting chore of mine at the Palace was finished I went back to the officer to see how things were coming along. Now, this is really anecdotal. It may not belong in this at all but it's fun. I got a telephone call from the official Vietnamese Guest House across the

street from the Palace. This is where the Vice President and Mrs. Johnson and the whole entourage were staying. I was told that the Vice President wanted to see me.

So, grabbing pencil and paper, I drove up to Guest House, got upstairs and the State Department Officer at the head of the stairs said, “The Vice President and his staff are on the balcony on the other side of the bedroom. You've got to walk through the bedroom to the balcony.” There was the Vice President of the United States, 6'4” tall, in his pajama tops. I repeat, tops. On the telephone to the White House. This is the telephone link which is relayed by radio via a ship at sea and thence to Washington. It's all “scrambled” as it goes.

Now here's the Vice President saying, “Jack! Jack! (obviously, talking to the President of the United States) Jack, this is Lyndon.” I don't know what the response at the other end was buy I can imagine that Kennedy, his wit sharpened to the extreme had asked, “Lyndon who?” Because the next word I heard was “Lyndon Johnson! Who do you think!”

So, between the Signal Corps and the photographer problems and communications between the Whit House and the Guest House in Saigon it was all just too much. We finally got the Vice President out of Saigon. And I guess it was then that he went off to Pakistan and did the camel driver routine. Was that the same trip?

Q: It was the same trip.

ANSPACHER: We were never so glad to see a vice president leave. Otherwise, did we do good in Saigon? I think we probably did, overall, until we got to a point where it was psychological warfare and nothing else. It had little or nothing to do with what USIA was principally intended to do in a normal peacetime situation. When you're at war the only thing that's going to make any sense is to conduct our kind of warfare, which is psychological warfare against the enemy. And so you have leaflet drops and you have cross-the-lines loud speakers. You have all kinds of gimmicks that might be feasible, and

you try some that aren't feasible. So whether you succeeded in terms of the basic U.S. role and USIS mission is, I think, academic in such a situation.

I left Saigon under the circumstances that I have described with respect to the change in PAOs.

Murrow Calls Anspacher in Hong Kong to Fly Immediately to Washington for Special Assignment

I left Saigon almost determined to resign from the Agency but I wanted to talk to Ed Murrow first about it and see whether he knew what this was all about, and if so why it was so terribly important to change things around. But I never really got a chance to talk to him about it because he had something else for me to do back at the Agency. I got as far as Hong Kong on the trip back when Mr. Murrow called me on the phone.

I was greeted at the Airport by an emissary from the consulate's PAO office, Bob Clark's office, who said, “You're not going to believe this.” I didn't. “The Director wants to talk to you. And as soon as you can get off this tarmac and back to the office we'll put in a call to Washington and you can talk to him.” When I did talk with him (Mr. Murrow) he asked me to come right back. I had planned on taking a ship because I don't like to fly and I thought I deserved a few days rest anyway. But Ed asked me to fly back right away because, he said, “I'm doing something here in which I want you to be involved.” He didn't tell me what it was. But my relationship with Edward R. Murrow, as was many other people's, was that if he asked you to do something you turned yourself inside out to do it and you didn't press him for a reason why.

The Counter-Insurgency Training Program

So we came home by air. I went in to see the Director the day after I got the family settled in Washington. He broached this proposition about eh “counter-insurgency program” that was being established at the Foreign Service Institute, and inter-Agency task force headed

up by Robert F. Kennedy. “Would I act as USIA's representative?” “Certainly. If that's what you want, Mr. Murrow, that's what you get.”

So I was assigned to the Agency's Training Division. I spoke for the Agency at various meetings wherever we got down to the business of planning the counter-insurgency program. I spoke for the Agency in setting up the FSI counter-insurgency course. And I guess I did the first USIA presentation. After that, I organized presentations at FBI by various people including Mr. Murrow himself and one or two other people from the Agency who were knowledgeable about this kind of thing. From that came the renowned, I guess, course in “counter-insurgency” that we ran at the Agency for about two years. Bill Grenoble was head of the Training Division at that time. Under his guidance, we set up a whole series of six or seven week-long programs once a month for a year or more.

In any event, we had to get speakers from within the Agency, from the State Department and from other agencies and from outside. I rather think that was a successful program. Most of the Agency's officers in Washington went through the course. A lot of them learned something. Not everybody learned all that we thought was available to them, but I think on the average we probably did pretty well.

I thought that we had some pretty good people in to speak, including Ambassador Kenneth Todd Young and Ithiel de Sola Pool, a sociologist from MIT, and some newspaper people. Obviously we had Mr. Murrow himself and a man named Phillip Davidson from Columbia, who had been with us in psychological warfare during the war and is now a social scientist on the staff of the Columbia School of Journalism. Anyway, we had a pretty good roster of speakers at that course over a period of the year or so that we ran it.

From Counter-Insurgency to PAO, Mali

It was from there, after about a year or so, that I was offered, if that's what you can call it, the post of PAO in Mali, a country of which I had heard almost nothing. I looked it up on the map. And there it was, tucked away between Senegal and the Ivory Coast in West

Africa. So off I went as PAO to Mali, much to the surprise of my friends because some of them thought I was over-graded for that job. But it didn't make much difference to me. I didn't care too much. It was, as we like to say, “a challenge.”

So, it was from counter-insurgency that I was selected to go to Mali. It was the smallest post I had ever had. The Ambassador at the time was an ex-USIS Officer named William Handley who was at the end of his tour there. I really didn't have a chance to set up a program with him at all. He was perfectly willing to let me just move in and take over and work it out with a charg# d'affaires until we had a new Ambassador, which I did.

We had a very small staff, I think just an Information Officer, a Cultural Officer, and an American secretary. We had about a dozen Malians. We had had some bad times there before my arrival. My predecessor there was Bill Haney, who had the enviable reputation of speaking, understanding, reading, and writing French about as well as anybody in our Agency. So it was a hard act to follow in that sense. He was not there when I got there. Nobody was there except my Information Officer, Phil Pillsbury (of the Pillsbury Flour family). He did not stay long because he was persona non grata-ed out of there for having talked too much to the wrong people. Phil was a young man, over enthusiastic. There was some dissidence in Mali, and I'm afraid he formed too close a relationship with some of the dissidents.

In any event, I finally wound up with a replacement for him and a very good Cultural Officer named Marilyn Johnson, who eventually became a PAO in her own right, and an Ambassador in her own right, too, also in Africa. She was an Africanist, also very fluent in French. She was an outstanding Officer. She deserved every promotion and every accolade she earned. The Charg# d'affaires was a man named Bayard King. We got along reasonably well, although I suspect he got along better with my new Information Officer than he did with me. But that was a matter of personalities, not programs.

Difficulties of Doing USIA Work Under a Communist Leaning Government

We were constrained somewhat there because the President of Mali and his staff, hi information minister and cultural education people especially, had been reasonably successfully wood by the Soviets. Having just broken free, so to speak, not by dint of any revolution on their own part buy simply because the French had given up West Africa (Mali had just recently, two or three years earlier, got its independence from the French). They were ripe for the plucking by the Soviets.

We had had some problems prior to my arrival there with the government, partially because of its communist leanings. Mali wanted to become a leader of the Third World, but Mali is never going to be a leader of anything. It just is not built that way. Its geographic and political and economic situations are such that it will never be a leader. But its president had delusions of grandeur and he had opted for what he called independence, neutrality in the Third World, and so forth.

He gave us a lot of trouble, such as imposing censorship on anything we wanted to publish or even to import, and also closing down our library. Our library had been closed for six months prior to my arrival there. I wasn't quite sure what I could do about it because he wasn't going to let us open it again. However, we managed to find, around the edge of the Embassy courtyard, some outbuildings that hadn't been used. So I arranged for them to be cleaned out, and we opened a Reading Room “in the Embassy” which the local government, because of the Embassy's rights under the treaty of diplomatic privilege, could not touch.

Our new reading room could be entered from the street, and we put up a sign which simply said U.S. Embassy Reading Room. We put in a “librarian” and, sure enough, we got some audience among the people who had been coming to our old library and some other new “customers.” We let it be known among the schooled in Mali, particularly in the capital, that the Reading Room was available to them. We didn't lend out books, so it was not a full fledged library. But at lease we had a place to show our face and a place to put up some exhibits. Our tough Minister of Information refused to allow our French language

publications to come in from Paris, and refused to allow us to distribute material that we published ourselves such as a weekly news-bulletin.

And Topic Magazine was prohibited so we had to fiddle around with that one for a while. What we did eventually with both Topic from the Beirut reproduction center and the French- language publication called Informations et documents, out of Paris, was to circumvent the censorship.

I got a list of names of about 300 Malians I wanted to be sure would read these magazines, and what passed for street addresses in Mali. We sent this whole list of names up to Paris, supplied the magazines from the list into an Addressograph and had Paris mail the French-language magazines directly. Paris was asked simply to go to the post office, put postage stamps on the publications and mail them to these people in Mali. Sure enough, the information minister had issued the prohibition against distribution, but he had forgotten to tell the post office. The post office just let those publications go through and they were delivered to the addresses we had targeted.

I think we circulated Topic the same way. We also produced a news bulletin, on a weekly basis, by having that come out of Paris. We manufactured it in Mali, sent it to Paris, and they sent it back again, addressed by hand to individuals. Terribly complicated, but it worked. And thus we had some impact.

The Malians were hard to deal with because they had no real sense of responsibility for time or obligation. We would set up English classes, and the first class or two 13 or 14 or 15 or 20 or 30 people would come. The next time three people would come. And that would be the end of it. We would invite people for dinner or to have an English lesson and they would never show up. Very difficult place to work. But I think we were making headway, because at some point we had enough friends to tip us off to some things that were happening in China in which our government was interested. And although I played no particular role in all this, we had made enough friends somehow, either the Embassy or

USIS, so that word — the news from China that we wanted to hear we heard through the Malian government. It was surreptitiously passed to us by one of our friends in the Malian government.

Out in the countryside where we could get away from the ministers and from the government we also found friends who were interested in what we had to say. For instance, we would take a boat trip up the Niger River and stop for a day or two in a settlement and borrow or rent a jeep. Or we'd drive out there, go off into the bush, and come across tribes of Malians who had never seen a motion picture, who had never seen a photograph of themselves. And after some discussion — we always had a Malian with us because these people didn't speak any French — we would take a Polaroid picture of the tribal chief, much to his amazement. First we had to convince him that it was not his spirit disappearing into this machine. Then we would leave some posters with him, things about the United States, or a flag. And we would leave a picture of John F. Kennedy. And he would say, “Oh yes. We know about President Kennedy.” And I wondered to myself how in the world did they ever find out about him.

Q: Were there any radios out there?

ANSPACHER: They may have had a radio somewhere, but not in this particular village. Communication was by jungle drums, including the word about the death of John F. Kennedy. We also showed his film, that famous film.

Q: “Years of Lightning, Day of Drums.”

ANSPACHER: Yes. We showed that, and usually had a good audience for it. It was subtitled in French, which had to be translated into the Malian language by one of our local employees, usually the operator.

Can I go back to Saigon for a minute?

Temporary Reversion to a Saigon Incident

John Glenn made his voyage around the world while we were in Saigon. We followed that, of course, very carefully. We were all—I was at least—impressed by the fact that the City of Perth in Australia turned out all its lights. I called my Ambassador and said (this was four o'clock in the morning), “I'm afraid I've got to wake you up because you've got to do something right now. You've got to call the Australian Ambassador to this country and express to him the gratitude of our country.” I don't know whether he did it or not. I guess he did. But I made a point of thanking my opposite number, the Australian PAO and the Australian Ambassador as well the next time I saw them. I thought that was a great thing. It was one of the highlights of our stay in Saigon.

The whole space business was just really getting underway for us then. I am not overly enthusiastic about all the money and effort and heaven knows what we're putting into this space venture, what with the loss of the “Challenger” and so forth. But that particular moment will live in my memory as much as anything in my career, I guess. It wasn't much and I didn't have anything to do with it except to remind our Ambassador to act on behalf of the United States. And I assume he did what I recommended he do. So much for Saigon. I knew there was something else I wanted to talk about.

Back Again to Mali

Anyway, back to Mali. What else did we do in Mali? We sent Malians to the United States to learn about how the other half lives; that worked reasonably well. On of my best acquaintances—I can't at this stage call him a friend—we had sent to the United States. He was the Mayor of Timbuktu; [The interviewee misspoke. Timbuktu is the capital of Sudan. Bamako is Mali's capital.] he was also the President of the National Assembly.

People who had any French education, either in Dakar or in cosmopolitan France, rose to the top. They could hold two or three jobs simply because there weren't that many of

them. You'd find a minister who was also a deputy or president of this or president of some commission, also minister of that. Here was the Minister of Timbuktu, also President of the National Assembly that we had sent him to the United States to watch our Congress at work. He was an influential person and one whom we had influenced. At least both the Ambassador, who by this time was C. Robert Moore whom you may or may not know, and I were reasonably confident of this.

Q: I don't know him.

ANSPACHER: He had been born, I think, and certainly brought up in Turkey and gone to Roberts College; he had been DCM in Cambodia when I was in Saigon. I had met him briefly when he'd come down to Saigon. His wife was Dutch-born and a Dutch foreign service “brat.” They had met in Venezuela and had married some years earlier, obviously. He was a very fine Ambassador. He did all the right things and said all the right things at the right time. And she was also outstanding.

This Mayor of Timbuktu had us out to his place on several occasions for a weekend. Spending a weekend in Timbuktu is an experience in itself. There is no Timbuktu Hilton. there is a place called “the encampment” which is a couple of rooms with a couple of beds and mosquito netting and no running water. If it did have running water, one wouldn't drink it anyway. Lots of mosquitoes and flies and no fresh food. Quite an experience. But that's Timbuktu.

We made more points in Mali by sending people to the United States and by introducing them to films and publications than we did anything else. English teaching didn't really catch on. We had some cultural events, singers and dancers from the United States. Everybody kind of enjoyed them but they didn't go wild about them.

Temporary Look Back at Cambodia

Can I go back to Cambodia for a minute? One of our cultural events was the Benny Goodman band complete with Helen O'Connell and some of the great musicians of Benny Goodman's band. Prince Sihanouk considered himself a saxophonist, of course, which made the event really successful where it counted most.

Q: I remember that.

ANSPACHER: He wasn't in Goodman's class, of course, but he did consider himself a competent saxophonist. We put on a concert out in the palace grounds, with 25,000 steaming — and I mean it was hot — steaming Cambodians listening to Benny Goodman. Of course, their rhythms and our rhythms, as you know from your time in Asia, are wholly different. They have a different set of tonal values — I don't know enough about music.

Q: Five tonal.

ANSPACHER: It's a five-tonal language and it's a five tonal music system. In Vietnamese as in Chinese you can say the same word five different ways in one sentence, make a sentence out of one word just by changing the tone. I don't think they understood a word or a note of Benny Goodman's band. Certainly not a word of Helen O'Connell. But they had a wonderful time. And I'm sure they're still talking about it. They don't pronounce his name right. They don't really whistle “Sing, Sing, Sing.” But they had a great time.

The prince asked to play something with the band. Goodman agreed, holding his ears. So they played something which Prince Sihanouk called “a fast.” So Benny Goodman played something fast. I guess Sihanouk came in about three beats too late. But that's all right. At any rate they all had a great time.

Return to Mali

So much for Cambodia. Back to Mali. We must have done something right, wither we and/or the Ambassador and/or CIA. Because sometime later, it must have been two to three

years after I left Mali. I was stationed in Ethiopia when the government changed in Mali. My Ambassador from Mali, Ambassador Moore, was by then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. He cabled me and asked me about the new president in Mali. It turned out that the new president's wife had been our local USIS secretary in Bamako. So apparently somewhere along the line we had convinced enough Malians that this leftist trend of theirs, this communist orientation, was not going to get them anywhere.

Malians, as do so many of these newly-independent countries, talk in glowing terms about the wonders of communism as opposed to capitalism. They don't really know; they haven't passed through capitalism. They don't know what capitalism is. They don't know what socialism is. They go from colonialism to communism without stopping to see what there may be anything in between, such as capitalism or, if you like, even socialism.

And, of course, they do it in ringing tones. This impressed me in Mali particularly. I kept asking people about this. We made an effort to translate as much as we could into Bambara, which is not easy because only the Jesuits have managed to get something down in written form of the Bambara language. We worked principally in French. It was the lingua franca between the English-speaking Americans or British and the Bambara-speaking Malians.

But when the President of Mali spoke about those “terrible” French colonialists and how they have to break away from colonialism and the French “oppressors,” he did it all in French, never in Bambara. I kept asking why he didn't speak his own language. I could never understand why they could never bring themselves to conduct these diatribes against their French colonial “oppressors,” if that's what they want to call them, in their own language. Perhaps it is more to impress us—in French—than their own people in their own language. It's happened elsewhere, too.

1966: National War College Then Back to Africa (Ethiopia) 1987

How do you follow Mali? I went to the National War College in 1966 as one of three USIS representatives and spent a year there. The late John McKnight was the USIA faculty member at the time at the college. That's where I met John and got to know him so well. I wrote my so-called “term paper”—which will not live in history—about public opinion and world affairs. It was from the National War College that I was offered my next chance to go back to Africa, which fascinated me. I had a feeling for that area more than for Latin America. I'd already had five or six years in Asia, and unless I spoke Arabic there was not really much point in going to the Middle East. But I could get along with French in Africa and not be looked down upon as not speaking the local dialect.

So I was very anxious to find a French speaking post in Africa, particularly Rabat. I knew Morocco quite well. I had spent some time there during the war. And while we were in Mali we used to take R&R in Morocco. So I was anxious for a post in the Maghreb, Morocco or Tunisia. At that time we even considered Libya as a potential possibility. It turns out now it would have been quite an experience. There wasn't anything available. Ned Roberts, I think, was in Morocco at the time and was going to stay there until hell froze over. Where is Ned now?

Q: He is retired in Cocoa Beach. [Note: Ned has died since this interview took place.]

ANSPACHER: Oh, that's right. I'd heard that he was there.

Q: Has been for several years now.

ANSPACHER: Yes, that's right. Anyway, nothing French was open. But would I take Ethiopia? Well, sure I'd take Ethiopia.

[About two minutes of recording was somehow lost between tapes. The conversation concerned the occasional use of contract employees, and the attitude of the Peace Corps employees who, in their attempt to maintain distance from Foreign Service personnel,

sometimes failed to observe the rules of conduct under which the Foreign Service operated.]

This arrangement with contract employees it seems to me is counter productive unless it's very carefully spelled out to them, possibly even in their contract. In the last analysis the American Ambassador represents not simply the Department of State or Department of this or Agency of that. He speaks for the White House. He speaks for the President of the United States. And like it or not, he—and we—just have to dissociate ourselves from anything which is anti-U.S. This is not to say that even in this particular context one should not encourage freedom of speech. After all, it is something in which the Americans and other people believe. But as experience with the Peace Corps has frequently shown, it can get to be difficult. The Peace Corps people frequently consider themselves “contract employees,” apart from the Embassy.

USIS did have in Ethiopia, for a short while, a young Junior Officer Trainee who had come out of the Peace Corps. He forgot entirely that what he though of as Peace Corps independence could not be translated into USIA “independence.” His value to us was that he spoke Amharic, which nobody who hadn't spent some time there would learn unless he had to stay there. It's a difficult language but he spoke it; he was very helpful from that point of view, albeit perhaps under some suspicion, which is frequently the case.

I remember harking back to days even before I got to Vietnam that one or two of our people who were expert in Vietnamese had been declared persona non grata because they were able to eavesdrop on the Vietnamese in the trolley cars and buses. The Vietnamese government didn't want us eavesdropping on their conversations. Fluency in these strange languages is sometimes counter-productive.

In Addis Ababa, there are many Ethiopians who had come to the United States and who had drawn from their American experience a good deal of affinity for things western, even things American. USIS also had some tremendously loyal and dedicated local employees,

some of the best I've ever had on my staff. I must add we also had some very fine people in Vietnam. They were beautiful people, highly intelligent, educated, well thought of in their communities and certainly well thought of by us. Same thing in Ethiopia. We had a senior Ethiopian who in some ways stood up for the United States to a degree that some Americans would not, particularly in times of crisis.

We did have crises in Vietnam with bombings and attacks on the palace and our officer —and our homes—were not too far away. In Ethiopia our library was attacked on several occasions. We had crowds and mobs, perhaps instigated by other people, perhaps not, outside our USIS offices. But it seems to me that they were paying attention to us. We had a good turnover in our library, good and well-attended programs in our library. People thought enough of us to come and scream at us, at least. So I think we made some of our points. I have always felt it was Ethiopia that brought me to a proposal I made to the Agency which got about as far as many proposals to the Agency get.

One goes back to my first USIS experience, in Bonn, West Germany. There was a large Atoms for Peace exhibit that you may remember that was trucked all over the countryside in the U.S. and eventually in Western Europe as well. I proposed that we put this thing on a barge and float it through France and Germany wherever the canals and rivers connected. I thought that was a peachy idea, less expensive than putting it up and taking it down, putting it up and taking it down. I might as well have been talking up a chimney flue. Nothing ever happened, not even an acknowledgment.

Pretty much the same king of “blank stare” reception was accorded a USIS-sponsored research project in Ethiopia. With the Agency's concurrence and collaboration, we had contracted with a Swiss public-opinion firm to do a study of attitudes among the Ethiopian population, at several levels of society. This whole idea, of course, was cleared with the Ministry of Information, albeit somewhat reluctantly (the Ministry had never dared to test public opinion in that Imperial society). We assured the Ministry that the questionnaires, as well as the responses, would be shared between us, and the Ministry's imprimatur on the

project was thereby “guaranteed”...which helped immeasurably in putting the respondents at their ease, more or less.

Nevertheless, we and the Swiss team which came down for about two weeks, operated with the utmost discretion, with little direct contact between it and USIS, after the initial introductions at the Ministry. Not to labor the story, the project went off reasonably well and even the Ministry seemed gratified to learn something, at least, of what the population, in cross-section, was thinking about “public affairs.” The top copy of the final report, or study, was of course presented to the Ministry by the Swiss, with no USIS presence in flesh or in spirit. To all intents and/or purposes, this was a Ministry-sponsored project, with the Swiss, and we can only hope that someone, somewhere, in the Ethiopian government hierarchy, has made some use of what was learned.

It proved less assuring to learn that the Agency's research people had just glanced at the final report, and filed it away. I never did learn who, if anyone, had read it thoroughly enough to pass on to succeeding PAOs gleanings from it which might have been of some use. So far as I could determine, it still lies gathering dust in some archive or other. Even the incumbent Director of Research, whom I met recently, seemed surprised to learn there ever had been such a project and a reasonably valid report issued therefrom.

Opinions on Conduct of USIS Program in Ethiopia

When I left Ethiopia, when I got back to Washington, somebody asked me what I thought about our programs. And I said I think we ought to restructure. Maybe it can be done in some places. Maybe it is being done. But the technical side of USIS, the films, production, the printing plant, should be off in a garage somewhere behind the library. All that needs to be seen of USIS is the library and the programs that are produced in the library, the auditorium that should go along with the library, and the cultural programs, the exhibits that are mounted by the people who work for the library whether they're in the library or in some school somewhere. The information department that churns out the magazines,

the news bulletins, the films, the radio programs and whatever, can be back in a barn somewhere. In production, they really don't make any difference to the audience. The production mechanism is important to good program content, but it's the product that makes sense to the audience. If the product comes out through the library, so much the better. It should at least look to the suspicious less like “propaganda.”

The Press Attach# also should not be at USIA headquarters, whether he's the PAO or the Press Attach# per se. Sometimes it's the same person as it was in Ethiopia. Put him in the Embassy. He's a policy maker—or a policy contributor in any event—and the Embassy spokesman. The Chief Information Officer who frequently acts as deputy PAO should be supervising the “information” output.

Q: They had them separated in Thailand.

ANSPACHER: Just before I left Addis, we sent a man to the moon in that summer of 1969. I was in Ethiopia starting in '67 and on through summer of '69, so this was virtually the last major program that I established there. It worked pretty well. We had a lot of models and other material support from the Agency. I got people to look up into the sky, waiting to see the “shot.” This also worked in Mali at a time when the U.S. had somebody orbiting the earth. I had the Malians looking up in the sky, too. We announced the “shot” in advance, of course, and then we used our own personnel, spotted around town, looking up in the sky. they couldn't see anything, but we had a lot of the local people looking up and asking “Why are we looking?” This then gave us the opportunity to explain. “You're looking for the American astronaut.” Or “You're looking for the American space shot to the moon.” It was kind of a gimmick but it worked.

One particular experience closed out my stay in Ethiopia, and in effect kind of tied off my career. I didn't think of it in these terms at the time. But it did seem to cap, in a way, my career as a foreign service PAO. We established a daily news bulletin in English for about 500 so-called “elite” Ethiopian “subscribers.” This was in the midst of this debate which

may still be going on as to whether you target the elite or the mass. Well, we were doing a little bit of both, depending upon the medium. The news bulletin in English was “elite.” Radio programs, films, and exhibits, for instance are “mass audience” media. Different strokes for different folks.

We published the bulletin in English, every day. I had put in whatever expertise I had to get this thing don properly, in good form, and out on time. It was supposed to be on the desk of its “subscribers” by ten o'clock in the morning or as early as we could get it there given the Wireless File transmission on which it was based. It was not dull. It was not textual unless something highly significant had to be handled by text.

When the inspectors—the last inspection I had a month or so before I left—came out, they made a very strong point about publishing this in English. They said the Soviet Embassy publishes theirs in Amharic. I agreed but that doesn't necessarily make it the better thing to do. I believed then and I believed when I left, and despite the fact that my successor reversed my decision, I still believe that I was right. The elite audience has been brought up in the English language, which sets them apart and gives them the feeling of an “inside track” on what's going on in the rest of the world. Publishing in a language with which they are preferably familiar and which in a sense honors them by reflecting their knowledge of the language and of other things worldly, is more effective than going down to their level by publishing in Amharic, which like many of these esoteric languages, even in the written form, is imprecise.

The inspectors wrote this critique in the inspection report. I objected to it. They can disagree with me, but that doesn't mean I'm wrong. My successor read the inspection report and went to Amharic in that daily news bulletin. I think he was wrong. Now, of course, I don't think there's a news bulletin of any kind.

Q: Probably not.

ANSPACHER: Probably not. And that, I think, pretty well closed out my last program in Ethiopia. From there on I waited for another assignment, did a three-month stint as a consultant to the U.S. element of NATO in Stuttgart, projecting into the future psychological warfare plans that we had used about 30 years earlier in World War II. But you couldn't tell the Army that. They wouldn't believe it. And so we come to the end. I retired from USIA in 1970.

Q: Okay, John. This has been an interview with John Anspacher conducted by G.L. Schmidt on the 22nd of March 1988. And this concludes the interview.

End of interview